UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/115
4 February 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 4 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a press release issued today, 4 February 1999, by the Office of the Ethiopian Government Spokesperson regarding renewed Eritrean shelling at Ethiopian positions on the Badme-Sheraro front. This latest Eritrean action clearly shows that the Eritrean authorities are not prepared to accept, as strongly urged by the Security Council, the OAU Framework Agreement, and to end the crisis between them and Ethiopia by peaceful means.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Press release issued on 4 February 1999 by the Office of the Ethiopian Government Spokesperson regarding renewed Eritrean shelling on the Badme-Sheraro front

Beginning at 6 this morning, Eritrean forces began continuous shelling from their posts at Geamahlo on the Badme/Sheraro front. On Tuesday, 2 February at 4 p.m., they carried out heavy shelling for 45 minutes at the Zalambessa front. The Eritrean regime has embarked on this new round of shelling within days of President Isayas' 31 January statement in which he insisted that "Eritrea will never fire the first bullet". Such statements, which completely contradict the actions of the Eritrean regime, are clearly meant to serve only as a smokescreen for Eritrea's latest act of aggression. Eritrea has renewed hostilities just as the international community is starting to apply increased pressure on the government in Asmara to accept the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement for peace. This week's shelling also comes as the United Nations Special Envoy in Africa, Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun, is in the region to persuade Eritrea to accept the OAU peace proposal.

Eritrea's renewed shelling is only the latest in a pattern of aggressive behaviour meant to derail the peace process. Just prior to the OAU high-level delegation meeting in Ouagadougou in December 1998, Eritrea initiated shelling around Sheraro and Adigrat, followed later by attacks in Central Tigrai and Adi Gushu. Simultaneously, Asmara has been engaged in a propaganda campaign alleging that Ethiopia was launching an attack. In their continued attempt to provoke war with Ethiopia, Eritrean forces shelled the Biara locality of Badme/Sheraro on 23 January 1999, while the Eritrean authorities continue to prevaricate and pretend that they are willing to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. Ethiopia urges the international community to see Eritrea's actions for what they are, and apply more tangible pressure on the government in Asmara so that there may be a peaceful resolution to the conflict.